Restriction on Production and Sale of Bt Cotton

206. SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are restrictions on Bt Cotton and on production and sale of its seeds;

(b) whether Government or any Govenrment agency has issued any instructions to cotton producing States for destroying or not cultivating Bt Cotton and for not producing Bt Cotton seeds;

(c) whether any State is giving conditional permission for research or for any such purpose; and

(d) whether such cotton is being cultivated in China, America and some other countries, without any kind of restriction?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Bt cotton is a bollworm resistant genetically modified crop. As per Rule 7 of the Rules for Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and storage of hazardous microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms of Cells 1989 notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, no persons can import, export, transport, manufacture, process, use or sell any hazardous microorganisms or genetically engineered organisms or cells without the approval of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) set up in the Ministry of Environment and Forests. GEAC has so far not accorded approval for commercial release of Bt cotton in the country. The Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Company (MAHYCO) has been involved in the research, development and testing of transgenic Bt cotton varieties. The large scale field trials of MAHYCO's Bt cotton are under way.

(b) Navbharat Seeds Pvt. Ltd, Ahmedabad has marketed seeds of a transgenic Bt cotton variety (Navbharat 151) in Gujarat without any biosafety assessment and the mandatroy approval of GEAC, thereby violating the provisions of 1989 Rules and the Environment Protection Act 1986 the GEAC has directed the Gujarat State Biotechnology Coordination Committee to:

- procure the cotton bolls of Navharat 151 crop from the farmers at the appropriate support price;
- separate the lint and seed;

- destroy the seed and store the lint in safe custody till further orders from GEAC;
- complete destruction of crop residue by uprooting and burning and sanitation of fields.

This company is undertaking seed production of transgenic cotton in Nandyal and Kurnool districts of Andhra Pradesh. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has been directed to take necessary action for stopping the transgenic seed production and multiplication programme of the Navbharat Company, on the lines of the directives given to the Govenrment of Gujarat.

(c) State Governments do not accord approvals for research on genetically modified crops. Research activities including small scale field trials of genetically modified crops are approved by the Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation set up in the Department of Biotechnology under the 1989 rules, approvals for large seale field trials and commercial release of genetically modified crops are given by the GEAC.

(d) Bt cotton is registered for cultivation in United States of America, China and Australia after approval by the competent authorities.

Birds bazaar

207. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of Bird Bazaars being organised in Delhi and other cities in the country;

(b) if so, the reasons for which Government have not been able to prevent such Bazaars; and

(c) the reasons for which the steps taken by Government in this regard have proved ineffective?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The bazaars are organised mainly for the sale of such species of birds on which there is no restriction. However, instances of illegal sale of birds that are included in the Schedules of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 do come to the notice of the Government from time to time. Legal action is taken in such cases against the offenders. Absence of wildlife enforcement staff in cities is the main limiting factor in controlling the illegal trade of birds in these bazaars.